

B. SSO 2: Political processes, including elections, are competitive and more effectively reflect the will of an informed citizenry (*Elections and Political Processes*)

Free and fair elections are indispensable to democracy. Although other elements of democracy can develop before competitive elections are held, a country cannot be truly democratic until its citizens have the opportunity to choose their representatives. Elections can be a primary tool to expand political openings and increase citizens' political participation, offering political parties and civic groups an opportunity to mobilize and organize supporters and develop alternative platforms with the public. For an election to be free and fair and a step towards democratization, fundamental civil liberties such as freedom of speech, association, and assembly are required.

The Center supports this objective by providing technical expertise for strategic program design, funding urgent program needs, and offering rapid-response implementing mechanisms to USAID missions, embassies, and DC-based offices. The Center's approach emphasizes elections as part of a longer-term democratization strategy, with the objective of building indigenous capacity to carry out elections, targeting electoral commissions, political parties, civil society, and newly elected leaders. The Center assists missions and embassies in making strategic choices and program design decisions, and provides program management and implementing mechanisms to field missions and in a number of non-presence countries.

During this rating period, Center mechanisms have been tapped and G/DG personnel have been involved with developing and implementing a strategic approach to electoral assistance in a number of critical countries including Cambodia, Indonesia, Kosovo, Nigeria, and South Africa.

1. Center Involvement in U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities

Throughout FY 1998, the Center has consistently demonstrated its capacity to support and influence key foreign policy objectives by quickly designing, funding, and implementing new elections-related programs. Based on their strategic and programmatic expertise, Center personnel have also been increasingly asked by other USG offices to participate in critical foreign policy electoral initiatives.

The Center's senior elections advisor was asked to provide technical input to the elections chapter of the proposed **Kosovo** peace settlement and to participate in related negotiations in France. This Center input influenced the negotiations by addressing the need to assure sufficient time to hold credible elections and allow for voting by those displaced by the conflict. G/DG simultaneously participated (along with ENI and OTI) on the Washington-based task force that supported the peace efforts. This inter-agency work is anticipated to continue once peace negotiations are re-started.

In **Nigeria**, the Center led an assessment team that conducted the first evaluation of preparations for Nigeria's transition from military to civilian government, analyzing the organizational abilities of domestic election observers, the capacity of the independent election commission, and the potential role of international observers. Building on this assessment, the team worked closely with its U.S. NGO partners, State, and other Nigeria Task Force members to design and implement an electoral assistance program in less than two months, providing nationwide training for domestic observers and support for improved electoral administration and international observation. Without this assistance, programmatic support could not have been provided prior to the local elections that served to inform and improve the subsequent state, legislative, and presidential elections.

The Center reacted immediately to help USAID/Indonesia take advantage of opportunities provided by the sudden scheduling of the upcoming June 7 elections in **Indonesia**. Because Indonesia has not held free and fair elections in more than 40 years, a flawed election could derail this promising political

opening. Along with ANE, the Center co-chaired an agency working group to coordinate the initial design and implementation of the democracy portfolio, and participated in inter-agency efforts to design an overall USG strategy. Center staff traveled repeatedly to the country to help develop USAID's overall strategy, supporting elections assistance programming. As part of this effort, the CEPPS mechanism was utilized to support election preparation efforts, complementing a significant OTI program.

2. Sharing Technical Expertise and Lessons Learned

In addition to designing country-based programs, G/DG continued to develop program and policy guidance used by missions and other USG agencies in the area of elections and political processes. The Center also supported the efforts of its U.S. NGO partners to develop and share their lessons learned. For example, the Center's U.S. NGO partners held discussions of best practices and lessons learned in political party assistance in four regions. Support was also provided for regional associations of electoral commissions to develop their professional capacity and establish regional networking capabilities. In support of the Agency's disability policy, commissioners are engaged in discussions to develop proposals to assure access for disabled voters to polling.

The Center recently released a handbook, *USAID Political Party Development Assistance*, which includes lessons learned, case studies, and an analysis of program options. This handbook will help missions identify appropriate political party partners and opportunities for political party support. It addresses the issue of inclusiveness of party support activities, arguing that hard and fast rules may be difficult to apply to different country contexts. At the same time, the guidance recognizes USAID's need to remain in compliance with legislative prohibitions on influencing an election outcome.

The Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) project, which is co-funded with IFES through CEPPS funds, is a unique on-line publication produced in partnership with the UN and the Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance. USAID funding contributed to the first global resource providing information on the range of electoral systems and their financial costs, including an analysis of their political costs and benefits. This project is notable in that it allows for greater self-sufficiency, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability in the field by providing all stakeholders in electoral processes (both electoral officials and civil society) equal access to information. It further facilitates long-term planning and thoughtful policy choices far in advance of electoral cycles, rather than shortly before the event. The demand for this resource is reflected in web site use, which rose to a total of more than 27,000 separate visits during the first quarter of FY 1999. USAID funding specifically supported three of nine "modules" in the ACE program including electoral management, voter registration, and voter education, as well as the cost of translation into Russian and French. USAID/Mozambique and USAID/Indonesia both employed this resource during the program design phase of their electoral assistance programs.

G/DG supported the operations of the IFES F. Clifton White Resource Center, which shares comprehensive information on elections and political processes worldwide through a collection of primary documentation. Over 400 individuals visited the resource center in FY 1998, which also responded to nearly 200 requests for election-related information from election practitioners, USG policy makers, and academicians. In order to guarantee that USAID investments to date will result in sustainable services by the resource center in the future, the Center worked with IFES to develop a strategy to diversify its funding that will be implemented in FY 1999.

3. Field Support

Through its mechanisms and directly through staff advice, G/DG provided extensive support to the country programs described in the foreign policy section, as well as any requesting field missions. Overall, 29 country programs were supported using Center-managed elections mechanisms. While field

missions will report on their results directly, the following are a few examples of G/DG field support in the elections and political processes area:

The Center has continued to provide technical assistance to **Bosnia** through its IQC with IFES. As Bosnia continued its biannual municipal and presidential elections, Center and mission efforts focused on nationalizing the electoral administration, which is currently in the hands of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The CEPPS-funded NDI activity supported political parties and domestic monitoring efforts in anticipation of the 1998 presidential election. This was equally important to the nationalization of the electoral process.

CEPPS is also a valuable resource for ESF-funded activities not managed bilaterally through missions. In **Morocco**, the Center managed a political party and legislative capacity building program funded through FY 1998 ESF. This is a case in which the USAID mission has looked to the Center to provide a high level of management assistance due to the need to program funds in support of a State-driven strategy. The program objective is to support a more representative and competitive multi-party system. This program has succeeded in increasing the role and understanding of opposition political parties in promoting accountability and transparency in Morocco's governance. This is a notable achievement in a political environment in which multi-party democracy is a new concept.

At the request of the mission and U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu, the Center took the lead in negotiating and implementing DG programming of ESF funds in **Nepal**. Currently, the Center serves as the nexus among State, the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu, USAID/Nepal, and its grantees to implement activities to strengthen the legislature and electoral processes in Nepal. Without Center support, these activities would not have been possible, due to an overburdened staff at the USAID mission.

At the request of USAID/**Mali**, the Center served as the nexus among the AFR Bureau, USAID/Mali, and its grantees to design and implement activities to increase Malian citizens' participation in local governance. Specifically, the program supports women's organizations and female candidates to participate more actively in political party processes and local governance. The Center was instrumental in completing negotiations with U.S. grantees concerning which organizations could best implement the different components of this program and encouraging the mission, within the context of its strategy, to build upon the recommendations of a national forum addressing concerns about Mali's electoral process.

4. Program Management

Center mechanisms, particularly CEPPS, have been enormously popular and have proved versatile in meeting Agency needs. Last year, requests for assistance through CEPPS increased from \$7 million to \$14 million (100 percent). As the Center anticipates even higher levels of requests this year, it has increased the overall grant ceiling by \$30 million. Given that field missions have the option of providing direct grants or accessing other mechanisms, the decision to utilize Center mechanisms is noteworthy. Part of the reason the CEPPS mechanism has far exceeded the expected level of demand is its capacity to respond immediately as programmatic opportunities emerge. In FY 1998, the team forward-funded over \$2 million of CEPPS activities that could not have been realized otherwise. The most striking example is **Nigeria**. In this case, a nationwide domestic poll watcher training program trained and mobilized more than 15,000 monitors. Overall, neither electoral administration support nor observation would have taken place without the Center's technical advice and use of its flexible implementing mechanism.

By contrast, the level of demand for the elections IQC actually decreased in FY 1998. Missions reported that the key barrier to higher use was the cost structure (a high multiplier). This is currently being addressed in the new RFP/IQC in order to make this mechanism more customer-friendly and less costly.

Center staff and implementing mechanisms provided assistance to several programs in USAID non-presence countries. In addition, G/DG used CEPPS core funding to establish an Asian election monitoring network to monitor political developments in the region, share technical assistance among member organizations, and disseminate information broadly. In FY 1998, the network strengthened its organization through an exchange mission to Cambodia and the creation of a library of resource and materials in Bangkok for its members.

5. Expected Focus and Results through 2001

Over the course of the next year, the Center will continue to work on anticipated key countries, while responding to emerging priorities as necessary. In addition to continued efforts in Indonesia and Kosovo, anticipated priorities are likely to include Bosnia, Haiti, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, and Ukraine. Countries such as the DROC and Liberia may also become priorities depending on events on the ground.

The Center will produce new elections and political processes guidance as well as conceptual papers on electoral administration, political party assistance, local elections assistance, and post-elections assistance. In addition, a series of 10 country case studies highlighting best practices and lessons learned will be produced. These documents will serve DG officers by providing a more comprehensive analysis of USAID electoral assistance efforts, as well as issues relating to MFR.

The Center will continue to support the innovative work undertaken by its U.S. NGO partners. Toward their efforts to establish baseline performance measures, a workshop on lessons learned in electoral assistance will take place next year. A set of baseline development activities for CEPPS is also being refined to ensure it directly supports mission programs. Linking the Center's elections and governance work, proceedings from the legislative development workshop and a guidebook will be published, and their utility to missions evaluated.

Given Center budget constraints and an analysis of activities to date, the Center cut back on a number of NGO proposed election-related technical leadership initiatives. Remaining funds will be targeted towards ensuring the sustainability of effective activities such as ACE and implementing the sustainability plan developed for IFES' resource center. In addition, the Center will be exploring the option of targeting cooperative agreement "core" funds to support key bilateral programs of high foreign policy interest. Also, the Center will support development of a parallel vote tabulation assistance manual and an evaluation of voter education initiatives.

The Center will shortly re-bid its general elections and political processes IQC. In response to feedback to the field, the IQC has been improved in the following ways: increased ceiling for longer term IQC activities; revised cost structure that is more cost-effective for missions, making it more user-friendly; and simplified labor categories for management purposes. In order to augment its capacity to respond to rapidly emerging opportunities, the Center plans to incorporate a rapid-response component into its next electoral support IQC.

The CEPPS cooperative agreement will end during the next reporting period. The mechanism will draw down at the end of calendar year 2000. As part of the design process for a successor mechanism, the Center will conduct a needs assessment to determine how to improve service to the field. There will be a review of country-level impact and the quality of technical leadership, and the Center will review the partnership criteria. As CEPPS is such a crucial part of the G/DG portfolio, it is a Center priority to ensure that its follow-on has the same high level of quality and utility. Sufficient funds must be maintained to preserve the same rapid-response capabilities in the future.